

may be alleged, that as the great end of the gospel ministry is the salvation of souls, so, that minister is successful who has been the instrument of effecting this great work to any extent. We grant that when a multitude, or even a few, are brought from darkness to light through the preaching or teaching of a minister, he may be regarded as successful in his vocation, and may rejoice in the blessed fruit of his labours. That this would be success no one can deny, and every one would gladly acknowledge. In the same way Luther and Zuingli, and Calvin, and Knox were successful. In like manner, Dr. Duff and Anderson, and Nisbet and Wilson have been successful missionaries of the Cross. But shall we regard this manifest winning of souls as the only thing in a ministers labours which is entitled to the name of success? Must we number all the learned, devout, and devoted servants of Christ, who have gone down to their graves and left behind them no record of sinners converted and souls saved by their ministry, as *unsuccessful* in the work of the Lord? Shall they be considered as having laboured in vain—as having gone out to sow in tears, and returned without a harvest of sheaves? God forbid that this should be said! One man sows and another reaps; one plants and another prunes, and a third gathers the ripened clusters. Shall we say that only the reapers are successful labourers?—that they, and they only, are entitled to have their names written in the records of the church as successful ministers of the Word?—that they only shall receive from the judge on the day of account the approving sentence, “Well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”? This would be to consign to infamy many of the most faithful ministers of Christ, and to narrow the idea of ministerial success to a point that will not bear the test of Scripture or of reason.

What then is ministerial success? How shall we define it? We can tell what it is in the eye and judgment of God. In this point of view there is no difficulty at all. Scripture affords us sufficient light clearly to determine this question. God will judge his servants according to the talents he has given them. He will not ask from him who has only one talent, the same increase as he will from the possessor of ten. The faithful and diligent discharge of the special trust which God commits to any man will in His sight be regarded as the success of his work. He may not have converted a soul, or even edified a saint; he may not have been eloquent in speech or bold in reproof; he may have been but a little one among the thousands of Judah; but if he has been faithful and prayerful in the work which, in providence, he finds for his hands to do, he will be recognized among the victors who have fought the good fight of faith and won the crown of a glorious immortality. There can be no doubt as to what God in his infinite rectitude will reckon to be success in the ministry. He will judge righteous judgment, and this is the hope and the comfort of the poor, the insignificant, and the despised servants of the Saviour. They look to the heavenly things of the kingdom, and having communion with them, are able with meekness and patience to do and to suffer all that may be allotted to them by the heavenly Father. In the midst of their toils and sorrows, they hear the loving voice of Jesus saying to them, “be of good cheer it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

When, however, we come to consider what ministerial success is in the sight of men, or in the general estimation of the Church, the question is not so easily determined. Here we have to do with imperfect knowledge, and prejudice; with passion and indiscriminating appreciation of facts and events; with, in short, all the weaknesses and imperfections of human nature. We find the judgment of one generation condemned by that of posterity; one country, or people, or city, or district reversing the judgment of another. Human sentiments on this point are not unlike those which pertain in regard to the